1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Jan-09	4.90	10.89	13.57	15.36	18.63	11.79
Feb-09	3.50	12.66	16.83	6.55	11.62	10.81
Mar-09	1.20	11.72	10.83	-5.27	7.58	10.82
Apr-09	1.31	11.59	13.68	16.40	5.47	14.41
May-09	0.43	12.40	14.89	18.84	-0.18	11.18
Jun-09	-1.39	12.84	16.81	20.21	0.83	19.95

(c) The sharp decline in the overall inflation rate in 2009 stemmed from a major decline in the fuel group and a lesser decline in the group of manufactured products, accruing from a high statistical base in the corresponding period in 2008. Despite this decline, inflation in essential commodities continues to remain high, on account of lower agricultural production in some crops, increase in the minimum support prices and growth in demand.

(d) The Government monitors the price situation regularly, with price stability being high on its agenda. Measures taken to contain prices of essential commodities include selective ban on exports and futures trading in food grains, zero import duty on select food items, permitting imports of pulses and sugar by public sector undertakings, distribution of imported pulses and edible oils through the PDS and release of higher quota of non-levy sugar.

Protection from economic meltdown

1048. SHRI KAMAL AKHTAR:
SHRI NAND KISHORE YADAV:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is taking any steps and mechanisms that protect developing countries from the impact of the economic meltdown and ensure that the projected slower growth rates do not lead to reduced allocation for the social sector;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken in this direction so far; and

(c) the funds being allocated for the social sector meant for use of minorities in the country, especially in Uttar Pradesh?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) and (d) The Government has been monitoring and evaluating the effect of global economic developments on the Indian economy, in formulating its economic policies. Fiscal stimulus packages have been provided by the Government, from time to time, to address the adverse impact of global meltdown, on the domestic economy. The fiscal measures, *inter-alia*, include increased plan expenditures, reduction in indirect taxes and sector specific measures. These measures have been supplemented by monetary measures taken by the Reserve Bank of India.

The Government has provided adequate allocations in the Budget, for flagship programmes like National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, National Programme of Midday Meals in schools, Integrated Child Development Services Scheme. National Rural Health Mission and Bharat Nirman. The share of Central Government expenditure on social services and rural development, in total expenditure has increased from 15.48 per cent in 2007-08 to 19.44 per cent in 2008-09 (revised estimates).

(c) The Plan outlay of Ministry of Minority Affairs has been enhanced from Rs.1,000 crore in 2008-09 (BE) to Rs.1,740 crore in 2009-10, registering an increase of 74 percent. This includes Rs.990 crore for Multi Sectoral Development Programme for Minorities in selected minority concentration districts, Grants-in-aid to Maulana Azad Education Foundation which is almost doubled and provision for National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation and Pre-Matric and Post-Matric Scholarships for Minorities. Allocation have also been made for the new scheme of National Fellowship for Students from the Minority Community and Grants-in-aid to Central Wakf Council for computerization of records of State Wakf Boards. These funds are for the use of minorities in the entire country including Uttar Pradesh. The Government of Uttar Pradesh has made a provision of Rs.995.80 crore in the budget of 2009-10 for minorities.

Popularization of the New Pension Scheme

†1049. SHRI SUBHASH PRASAD YADAV: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has put forward some proposals to make the New Pension Scheme popular;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Pension Fund Regulatory Authority has requested his Ministry for special relaxation in this regard; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. In the Finance Bill, 2009, the Government has proposed to provide necessary fiscal support to the New Pension System (NPS). Accordingly, it has proposed to exempt the income of the NPS Trust from income tax and any dividend paid to this Trust from Dividend Distribution Tax. Similarly, all purchase and sale of equity shares and derivatives by the NPS Trust will also be exempt from the Securities Transaction Tax. Further, it is also proposed to amend Section 80 CCD of Income Tax Act, 1961 to extend the benefit of this section to all individuals participating in the NPS.

(c) and (d) The PFRDA had requested the Government to extend to the NPS the benefit of Exempt-Exempt- Exempt tax status, as available to other savings schemes like PPF, GPF, EPF, Life Insurance etc.; bear the cost incurred on NPS intermediaries in the initial years; and extend the tax benefit available under section 80 CCD of the Income Tax Act to the self-employed persons.

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.